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TAGS: [MOPS](#) [MASS](#) [KPAL](#) [KWBG](#) [PTER](#) [JO](#) [EG](#) [IS](#)  
SUBJECT: USSC DAYTON BRIEFS IDF CENTRAL COMMANDER ON STEPS  
TO STRENGTHEN PALESTINIAN CAPABILITIES

Classified By: Luis G. Moreno, Charge d'Affaires.  
Reasons: 1.4 (b)(d).

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SUMMARY  
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1. (S) U.S. Security Coordinator Lieutenant General Keith Dayton briefed IDF Central Command Commander Major General Gadi Shamni November 18 on efforts to date and future steps to strengthen the capabilities of Palestinian National Security Forces (NSF) and Presidential Guard (PG) units in the West Bank. LTG Dayton secured agreement from Shamni on the provision of training and equipment to the forces, with possible exception to the supply of protective vests. Shamni and the officers with him also agreed to allow Palestinian security forces to conduct a security operation lasting more than 24 hours in Nablus. Shamni painted a bleak picture of the West Bank, characterized by significant popular support for Hamas, cooperation between Palestinian police units and terrorists, and the absence of law and order. While sympathizing with Palestinian Authority (PA) President Abbas and PM Fayyad, he observed that they have few reliable people to help them implement an alternate economic and social relief system that could compete with those dominated by Hamas. Shamni agreed with LTG Dayton that the moderate Palestinian leadership and their security forces need to be strengthened, but stressed that Palestinian security forces should focus on expanding law and order, while the IDF carries out CT operations against "hard core" terrorists in the West Bank. Drawing on documents and statistics, Shamni asserted that the IDF has coordinated its activities with the Palestinian security forces, allowed their movements between zones A and B, and has allowed training and equipment transfers. END SUMMARY.

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USSC BRIEFS GENERAL SHAMNI ON HIS MISSION  
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2. (S) LTG Dayton briefed Shamni on his mission and the efforts he has taken to date to build up the capabilities of the Palestinian security forces serving the moderate Palestinian leadership in the West Bank, stressing that the U.S. Congress feels a sense of urgency after Hamas' takeover of the Gaza Strip in June, and accordingly has allocated USD 86 million for the project. He noted that President Bush had submitted a supplemental request the previous week for USD 25 million. The USSC laid out the next steps as follows, as Shamni and his staff took notes:

A) In January, a large battalion of Palestinian National Security Forces (NSF) will need to relocate to Jordan for 3-4 months of training. Their names will be provided to the Israeli Security Agency (ISA, aka Shin Bet) for vetting. The Jordanians have already agreed to receive the 700 forces, and Secretary Rice wants to see their relocation and training

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accelerated. This battalion will return to Ramallah and a new base in Jericho, and will be organized into companies to support Palestinian police in the West Bank. The Palestinians have already identified the battalion commanding officer.

B) 440 forces of the Palestinian Presidential Guard (PG) will be sent to Egypt in January for training. Egypt is eager to support this. There are some legal issues that need to be worked out, however, and the forces may have to go to Jordan instead. The unit has already been formed and is waiting to move. The U.S. has conducted its own vetting, and the Shin Bet is carrying out its security checks on the forces.

C) The U.S. is rebuilding the Palestinian security forces' training centers in Jericho. The USSC started with the PG's center, and is now moving to the NSF's center. A "train the trainer" program is set to start the week of November 18 in Jericho.

D) The USSC is overseeing a program to re-equip the PG and NSF. This includes vehicles and personal equipment. LTG Dayton stressed that his support programs are overt and do not concern the supply of weapons and ammunition. He noted that he is closely working with the Israeli MOD on the list of equipment to be supplied to ensure that Israeli concerns are met. The aim is to enhance the capabilities of the NSF and PG.

E) The USSC is building up the capabilities of the Palestinian Ministry of Interior. Because of its lack of planning capability, planners will be hired.

13. (S) LTG Dayton noted that he visits Nablus weekly to help organize the Palestinian security forces there and to keep them motivated.

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SHAMNI DESCRIBES GENERAL SITUATION IN THE WEST BANK  
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14. (S) Responding to a question about whether movement and access is improving for Palestinians in the West Bank, Shamni observed that while the U.S. sees it as a political issue, for Israel, it is a security issue. Shamni noted that it is an "important time" in the Israel-Palestinian relationship, and that the peace process needs to move forward. "We in Central Command are doing a lot to help the Palestinians," he claimed. He then described the coordination between Israeli security forces and Palestinian security forces as excellent. He noted that Shin Bet's forces speak to their Palestinian contacts through Brigadier General Yoav Mordechai (aka Poli), the chief of the Civil Affairs Administration in the West Bank. This ensures, Shamni said, that Israel speaks to the Palestinians in one voice. Shamni claimed that the Palestinian police have not had any problems moving within the West Bank.

15. (S) Referring to a statistics sheet, Shamni noted that in the first half of 2007, Palestinian and Israeli division commanders met 15 times, as compared to the three times they met in the first half of 2006. He claimed that brigade commanders have met 49 times since the beginning of the process, and that this is double the number of meetings that took place in 2006. Shamni claimed that the IDF had allowed Palestinian security forces to move platoon-sized units from A areas to B areas 119 times, and battalion-sized forces between A and B areas 1-2 times to address "tribal clashes."

He said he had allowed over 100 shipments of weapons (not from Jordan or Egypt) between A and B areas, and the transfer of Palestinian prisoners from Nablus to Jericho.

"Coordination is not a problem," he stressed, including in civil affairs.

¶6. (S) Shamni then described the "real problem" in the West Bank as Hamas, which he says is deeply rooted in Palestinian society. He observed that after Hamas' takeover of the Gaza Strip in June, there was a general perception that Hamas controlled Gaza, and Fatah controlled the West Bank. "This is not true," Shamni cautioned, adding, "Hamas is deeply rooted in da'wa social organizations and enjoys massive social support in Judea and Samaria. That is why we want to help you to help us by strengthening moderate forces." Shamni claimed that there is strong cooperation between terrorist organizations in the West Bank, and that Hamas is providing financial support to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), Fatah-affiliated terrorist groups, and other terrorists: "There are massive flows of funds into Judea and Samaria. We cannot influence these without help from the U.S. and Europe," he said. He claimed that schools and summer camps provide cover to bring in funds for terrorist operations. This makes going after the terrorist finances difficult, because when you hit them, you inevitably cut into funds for legitimate social programs.

¶7. (S) Shamni lamented that to date, he has not seen any "intensive activity" by Palestinian security forces against the "hard core of Hamas." "This hard core," he added, "is the hub of the problem. We are always happy that the Palestinians do what they do, but they are always too little, too late."

¶8. (S) Shamni described ways in which the IDF has been willing to help the Palestinian security services:

A) The IDF has supported the fugitive agreement. Shamni stressed that not one fugitive has gone to trial, and that they enjoy "full freedom of movement." He noted dryly that some even enjoy "nice shelters in Palestinian bases like the Muqata." Turning serious, Shamni claimed the IDF has evidence of coordination between terrorists and the

Palestinian police. Specifically, he claimed that persons planting IEDs at the entrance to Nablus' old city at night have warned the Nablus governor and the police of where the IEDs are so that they will not be harmed. The IEDs are placed and then moved, sometimes being stored in private apartments during the day. He noted that two weeks earlier, workers were killed when an IED exploded while they were renovating a house in the old city: "It was very embarrassing for the police, as it was seen as a lapse in law and order." Shamni said that the IDF's main terrorist target in Nablus, Mohammed Al Bazara (as heard) had been tipping off the Nablus police to the locations of rusty, old explosive charges. This allows the police to claim they are doing their job of collecting and destroying terrorist explosives, when in reality -- according to Shamni -- the charges are worthless. Shamni showed General Dayton pictures of the charges.

B) The IDF has allowed the capabilities of the Palestinian security forces to be built up, even when the outcomes do not seem to merit this. Shamni reiterated, "The Palestinians are not doing what they are supposed to do. If they want the fugitives to be jailed, we can help them by building jails. We allowed them to build a headquarters in Nablus. We are willing to allow them to be supplied vehicles and communications. We are willing to allow them to receive weapons and ammo, although we believe they have enough." Displaying frustration, however, Shamni said that while the Palestinians have good intentions, they produce "miserable outcomes." This, he explained, is why the IDF prefers to maintain responsibility for dealing with the "hard core." "It is much safer for us," he said, "We are happy that the Palestinian police will be trained in Egypt and Jordan. It is a good idea. We want well-trained security personnel with

the right values and adhering to a high operational standard.

This includes a national guard and the building of a training infrastructure in Jericho. We have no interests in blocking it. Just please coordinate with us."

C) The IDF has removed roadblocks in the West Bank. Shamni said that the IDF has removed as many roadblocks as it could within the last few months. He explained that the system of roadblocks is designed to channel movement into certain corridors within the West Bank. He then claimed that "not a single village remains unconnected to a city so that people can travel between that village and the nearby city within a reasonable amount of time." Israel, he said, is spending "lots of money" to help the Palestinians by building bypass roads: "We have achieved the minimum. Now we are trying to do more." He observed that the economy in the West Bank is improving, and that there has been a dramatic increase in the number of Palestinians who now work in Israel and the settlements: "More than 10,000 businessmen are now allowed to go into Israel. We recently issued an additional 1,000 'businessmen cards' to facilitate more travel between Israel and the West Bank."

¶9. (S) Shamni stressed that Nablus is the terrorist "laboratory of Judea and Samaria". The main threat of Palestinian terrorism comes from northern Samaria, especially Jenin and Nablus. Shamni claimed that the IDF over the past several months has hit the "terrorist infrastructure" in Jenin very hard, and that the terrorists there are trying to re-consolidate. He warned, "If necessary, we will enter Jenin again and mow the grass as necessary." Shamni said that Nablus is very complicated due to the number of refugee camps located in the city, and the layout of its old city. The IDF, he said, is challenged in ensuring that there is no collateral damage whenever it carries out operations there.

¶10. (S) Shamni said that based on what he and his men have observed so far in Nablus, the Palestinian security forces do not appear capable to deal with the "hard core" terrorists there: "This is why we have to be there, and why it is absolutely essential to have the roadblocks surrounding Nablus. If we remove the roadblocks, there will be a suicide bombing in Tel Aviv within weeks." He pointed to an explosive belt found in Tel Aviv during the Yom Kippur holiday earlier in the year that was apparently waiting for someone from Nablus to enter Israel, collect it, and use it in a terrorist attack.

¶11. (S) Shamni stressed, "We have to help the Palestinians together to help them cope with Hamas. I cannot envision

that Fatah will be able to produce massive actions against Hamas in the near future. I believe that Fatah has been torn apart into factions. I believe that the things that will happen within Palestinian society will determine the solution between Palestinians and Israelis. Our (Israel's) influence is less important than the dynamics in Palestinian society. There currently is no critical mass under Fatah to turn the pot over."

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DISCUSSION OF OPERATIONS IN NABLUS  
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¶12. (S) Responding to the USSC's question about who the IDF is going after in its nightly raids in Nablus, Shamni said that the IDF's top priority is to stop "ticking bombs." He admitted that the IDF is not always able to seize terrorist leaders or team members. He added that the IDF gets most of its information from interrogations of suspects that it detains. (The IDF does not arrest the suspects, as -- according to Shamni -- Israeli law requires their release within 24 hours.) The IDF's second priority in the nightly raids, Shamni said, is Hamas. "This serves Fatah. We want to weaken Hamas, especially the civilian infrastructure it employs to support terror," he said. He added, "If the Palestinians want to really overcome Hamas, they need to build alternatives to what Hamas provides to the population."

Why not have the Arab Quartet bring in money so that they can build up a secular economic infrastructure that Fayyad can run? Unfortunately, they are not doing this, and this means that Hamas is dominating the municipalities."

¶13. (S) Responding to the USSC's question as to whether the IDF has turned over the names of wanted leaders to the Palestinian security forces, Shamni said that it had: "We gave them the names, but the door is revolving. They arrest the leaders, and then they release them. In other cases, the leaders were warned that we were after them, and then they were allowed to stay in the Mugata." Shamni reiterated that the U.S. and Israel should be focusing the Palestinian security forces on maintaining law and order, and not on counterterrorism. "Hitting their mafia structures," he observed, "would undermine the terrorists."

¶14. (S) Bringing the issue around to Annapolis, where Shamni agreed that terrorism would be an issue, he said that the U.S. approach to building up the capabilities of the Palestinians is the right one. Still, he contended that what is needed is a "global campaign" to weaken Hamas: "This is needed, or there is no chance that Abu Mazen will get the support he needs to change the reality on the ground. We already lost Gaza. The real threat now is a Hamas takeover of Judea and Samaria. If the IDF were not there, it would have fallen already." Shamni said the U.S. and Israel's strategic aim should be to weaken Hamas -- to raise the costs of staying the course too high. "We must threaten the civilian support of Hamas. It is their center of gravity," he warned. Responding to the USSC's characterization of PM Fayyad as a man trying to do what he can to create an alternative social support network in the West Bank, Shamni said he agreed, but warned that Fayyad is not Fatah: "The problem is that Fayyad does not have troops to execute his plans. He is a good man but enjoys no support."

¶15. (S) In response to the USSC's recounting of Palestinian complaints that security forces are not allowed to operate in Area B, Shamni asserted that there are no limits on where the Palestinian security forces can operate. He then allowed that the IDF sometimes does not allow them to operate in Area B, but only when there are concerns that the IDF and the Palestinian forces would clash, or that their presence near settlements or settler roads would irritate settlers. Shamni claimed that the IDF coordinates with the Palestinian security forces on a nightly basis.

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NEXT STEPS OVER THE NEXT 2-3 MONTHS  
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¶16. (S) Turning to whether District Coordination Offices (DCOs) or some equivalent of them should be revived, Shamni said that the DCOs were useless. Recounting his time as commanding officer in Hebron in 1996-7, he said that the DCOs unfortunately created the impression of cooperation, while

yielding very little actual cooperation. In contrast, he said that the IDF and the Palestinian security forces truly coordinate now "at the highest levels" under Poli's leadership. He pointed to the calm during the olive harvest and recent, Jewish and Muslim holidays as evidence of this coordination.

¶17. (S) The USSC conveyed a Palestinian request that the their security forces be allowed to operate for more than 24 hours within Nablus. Shamni and the officers with him in unison agreed to this: "This is no problem. We have no problem with them going into Balata. We want them to be strong." When the USSC recounted that he had heard that there had been some problems in Balata between the IDF and Palestinian security forces, Shamni and his men vigorously denied this: "There was no showdown in Balata. They were in Balata, and we were in the casbah. They wanted to transfer prisoners from Balata to Jenin. We allowed it and it worked. If they coordinate with us, we will do all we can not to hinder their efforts."

¶18. (S) Turning to the supply of protective vests to the Palestinian security forces, Shamni grudgingly said that the IDF would agree to consider allowing a turnover of the vests as long as the request is "reasonable, for instance, to protect bodyguards of Abu Mazen." Shamni said that previous IDF refusals of such requests were because the "way" in which the requests were made was unacceptable. He stressed, "This issue needs to be coordinated and done properly."

¶19. (S) The USSC noted that a British brigadier general would soon be working in Ramallah as an advisor to the Palestinian Minister of Interior. He stressed that the general would coordinate his efforts with the USSC, and would need to travel to other cities in the West Bank to organize the Interior Ministry's offices in those cities. Shamni said he understood and promised to call the USSC if any problems arose. The USSC concluded by expressing his appreciation for the support of Shamni and his men, stressing, "I need to rely on you."

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